

FRANK READE



WEEKLY MAGAZINE.

Containing Stories of Adventures on Land, Sea & in the Air.

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FROM ZONE TO ZONE: OR, THE WONDERFUL TRIP OF FRANK READE, JR., WITH HIS LATEST AIR-SHIP "NONAME".



As Frank and his companions came in sight of the Dart, they paused. Clambering over the deck were a number of fur-clad forms. At first the explorers thought them human beings; but a closer glance showed that they were huge white bears.

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FROM ZONE TO ZONE;

OR,

The Wonderful Trip of Frank Reade, Jr., With His Latest Air-Ship.

By "NONAME."

CHAPTER I.

A SCIENTIFIC MEETING—THE NEW AIRSHIP.

A very important meeting of the American Scientific Society had been held in their Hall in the city of New York.

All the learned savants and geographers of the day were present, for the subject to be discussed was one of great interest.

For centuries countless efforts had been made to reach either the North or South Poles. The country contiguous to these points had ever remained an unexplored tract.

For many scientific reasons it had been deemed necessary to reach these points. Moreover, man's curiosity seemed to demand it.

But all attempts by land or sea had proved futile.

This was accepted as a fact. But the learned savants were disposed to believe the feat not impossible.

And this was why the meeting had been called.

The most feasible way to reach the Poles and the organization of a party to attempt it was the topic of discussion.

One man proposed the route through Greenland. Another favored the Behring Sea route. A third was in favor of approaching it from Siberia.

But none of these projectors could substantiate their plans with any logical method of procedure.

"Admit that the Greenland route is feasible," said the chairman, "how will you provide means of travel?"

"With dogs and sledges," said one man.

"And the supplies?"

Ah, here was the stumbling block. No sledge team could hope to carry the supplies for so large a party.

So that plan found chary support.

Thus the meeting was in a state of perplexity and much uncertainty, when an incident happened which put a new face upon matters.

Suddenly a short, broad-shouldered man, with glasses, pushed forward.

"Mr. Chairman!" he said.

"Professor Gaston!" replied the chair.

"I would like to submit a plan for reaching the Poles, which I confidently claim will be successful."

Instantly a great stir was created.

The savants all pushed forward. All knew Gaston well and favorably.

"Hear, hear!" was the cry.

At once the chairman rapped to order, and then addressed Gaston:

"How do you propose to reach the Poles?" he asked.

The professor looked around as if challenging denial, and said:

"By airship."

For a moment a pin could have been heard to drop in the hall. Then there was a murmur, and the members began to laugh.

"Did you hear that?"

"Proposes to go to the Poles by airship!"

"The man is crazy!"

"Where is his airship?"

The chairman rapped for order.

"I trust you will be courteous enough to give the gentleman a hearing," he said.

"Oh, certainly!" said a mocking voice.

Professor Gaston looked angry and made a hot reply:

"I was not aware that there was anything so extremely farical in my remarks," he said. "If I can substantiate them with the truth and actual demonstration, you can ask no more."

"We will ask for no more," said one of the crowd. "But can you do it?"

"I can."

"Where is your airship?"

"It is in existence, though not my property. When I have rendered this mighty aid to science, perhaps some of you revilers will be inclined to apologize."

With this Professor Gaston led the way to the speakers' platform, and was followed by a young man of remarkable appearance.

He was tall, slender and handsome. His features were clear cut, refined and remarkable for their stamp of intelligence. Every eye was upon him.

"Mr. Chairman," said Professor Gaston, courteously, "allow me to introduce to you Frank Reade, Jr., the most famous inventor on earth to-day."

The young inventor blushed with this glowing eulogy.

But he bowed to the chairman and exchanged a few pleasant words with him; then Professor Gaston addressed the society:

"Mr. Reade is the foremost inventor of the day. He is the creator of the Submarine Boat and many other wonderful things. He has now come to the front with a new airship with which he offers to travel from zone to zone in the efforts to locate the Poles.

"From one frigid zone to the other he will proceed with his airship and accomplish with the greatest ease that which has been since the creation of the world an utter impossibility for man to do.

"Now, brother scientists, what sort of a reception ought we to give to a man who agrees to do such a wonderful thing as this? I appeal to your fairness!"

There was a moment of silence. Then one man said:

"Let him prove his ability to do what he proposes, and not only the society but the world will bow down before him."

"I think I can prove that to you very quickly!" said Frank Reade, Jr. "I have solved the problem of aerial navigation long since, and you have only to come to Readestown to see my airship to believe it."

"Then your airship is a reality?" asked one of the professors.

"It is."

"And you have taken an aerial ride in it?"

"I have."

"We would like to see it."

"If you will come to Readestown in two days from now you will see it fly, and also see me off on my trip from zone to zone!"

"That there may be no misunderstanding, let me say that I am here to-night solely to please my friend, Professor Gaston, and only at his very urgent request.

"I have no axe to grind in coming here. I am seeking no emolument or pecuniary reward. I have simply offered to this society the privilege of allowing one of their members to accompany me and make valuable scientific data. It remains for the society now to act."

With firmness and with dignity Frank Reade, Jr., spoke. His speech and manner impressed the learned body of men deeply.

They saw at once that it was no ordinary man that addressed them in this manner. The tide of popular opinion in Frank's favor became almost overwhelming.

One man leaped upon a chair and cried:

"I move that the society send a representative and that Gaston be the man!"

Cheers filled the hall.

The learned professor looked gratified and pleased. He at once replied:

"I fear there are many much better qualified. Yet, of course, I would not refuse so important a trust if I am deemed capable."

The result was that a ballot was taken. The result was overwhelming. Gaston was unanimously chosen.

The great undertaking was begun.

That night the press of the country resounded with exciting reports of the meeting, and the proposed attempt of Frank Reade, Jr., to travel from zone to zone in his airship.

A committee of the Scientific Society went up to Readestown to take a look at the new airship.

Frank Reade, Jr., was always pleased to show his inventions. He led the company into a vast high-trussed building.

There, upon the stocks, was the wonderful airship.

She was just undergoing proper fitting out for the long trip. Two men of rather peculiar appearance were working upon her.

One was an Irishman with a shock of red hair and a broad mug. The other was a darky, black as ebony, and jolly as a genial Dutchman.

One was known as Barney O'Shea and the other as Pomp.

They had been in the employ of Frank Reade, Jr., for many years and were much devoted to him.

The airship as revealed to the visitors was indeed a wonderful machine.

In shape it was long and narrow, and built after the lines of a mackerel. The hull was of thinly rolled platinum, coated with bullet proof steel.

The shell thus formed could easily be lifted by four men, despite its huge proportions.

Along the sides of the shell were slides and a coarse network which could be let up or down so as to inclose the hull or make it open at will.

In these slides were round portholes for observation or to fire at an enemy through. The bow of the airship was sharp and carried a ram. The stern carried a pair of strong propellers.

In the stern also was the after cabin and galley, the quarters of the crew, Barney and Pomp.

Midway in the hull was the cabin and engine-room. The cabin was small, but fitted up exquisitely in leather and plush.

The engine-room held the powerful electric engines which formed the motive power of the airship.

These were Frank Reade, Jr.'s special invention, and the secret of their construction he would not betray to anybody.

Upon the prow of the airship was the wheel-house, and also a mighty powerful searchlight, capable of penetrating the darkest night for a distance of two miles.

Now let us turn to the elevating power of the famous invention.

Gas was not employed in any shape. A much stronger and safer medium was used, as the reader will agree.

There were three tall masts rising from the upper deck of the airship.

The mainmast carried a powerful rotascope, which was alone capable of supporting the airship.

The other masts carried four powerful wings of oiled silk and huge proportions. The shape and mechanism of these wings Frank had derived from the model of the butterfly, an insect noted for its airy and swift flight.

By means of various pulleys and sockets these wings were made to act as lightly and gracefully as the model.

This is a meager and incomplete description of the Dart.

The Scientific Society's committee were overwhelmed with the wonderful mechanism and the simple practicability of the Dart.

"Mr. Reade, we are delighted," said the spokesman, "and we feel sure of your success. If you do not fail you will surely put your name upon the topmost scroll of fame."

"I shall hope to succeed," replied Frank, modestly. "That is my aim."

The committee took its departure.

Only two days more remained of preparation for the wonderful voyage from zone to zone.

The whole scientific world was agog. After the sailing of the Dart with their representative, Professor Gaston, aboard, they waited with deepest interest for news from the party. They were destined to wait many weeks.

CHAPTER II.

THE ICE-BOUND SHIP.

Far down in the Antarctic Ocean a good ship was battling with heavy seas and a head wind.

For weeks the whaler Albatross had been trying to make headway against the vigorous norther which constantly headed them off.

But a few weeks more remained for them to get into northern seas before the winter would set in.

Captain Hardy had spent one winter among the ice and snow of the Antarctic and had no desire to spend another.

The ship was loaded down with whale oil, and pecuniarily the cruise bid fair to be a tremendous success.

But provisions were getting low, and to be nipped in the ice again meant a horrible fate, nothing short of starvation.

Realizing this, it was little wonder that Captain Hardy paced the deck of his ship anxiously and studied the northern sky.

"Well, Jack Wallis!" he cried, in his bluff way, "it still blows, and, by Neptune, it looks likely to keep on. We can't make seaway in such a wind. What are we going to do?"

Jack Wallis, the mate, was a tall, handsome fellow, with resolute blue eyes and Saxon complexion.

He was a favorite with the crew and brave as a lion.

But his face now was a trifle pale. He realized the danger of their position quite as well as did Captain Hardy.

He was not thinking of his own safety, but of those aboard the ship and their prospective fate as well as the peril of a certain very charming young lady on board. No other than Lucille Hardy, the captain's daughter.

The captain had yielded against his will to Lucille's pleadings to be allowed to come on the voyage.

He knew better than she did the mighty risk involved.

But he had finally yielded. It was true that Lucille was the light of the ship. The crew to a man worshipped and revered her.

Two years under the Southern Cross was a long while to remain away from home.

But Lucille had been happy even in the monotonous routine of ship life.

Now, however, when the prospect of being compelled to spend another winter in frozen latitudes confronted him Captain Hardy wished devoutly that he had left her at home.

All this prospect, so dreadful, might have been averted had they started a month earlier for home.

But striking a school of whales, the temptation to fill every barrel aboard had caused the captain to linger.

In an ordinary season, however, he would yet have succeeded in getting beyond the circle.

But it seemed as if the fates themselves held the north wind in their hands. It had grown in fury for weeks.

And now the cold had begun to set in.

Pack ice even showed itself, and the rigging was frozen at times, so that a block or stay could hardly be moved.

No wonder the captain was anxious.

"We must bend every sail!" he declared. "Unless we get out of here this week it is winter quarters, and——"

He did not finish the sentence.

Something like a groan escaped his lips.

But every day the wind grew stiffer and the Albatross labored harder.

It was certain that she would never make the northern seas. A gloom settled down over ship and crew.

The sailors, brave fellows all, could not help a murmur.

Many of them thought of their homes in the far North where dear ones were awaiting them. Alas! it looked as if they would never see them again.

Day by day the vessel lost headway.

Then one day the black clouds shut in from the north and there came an ice storm, the like of which they had never seen before.

There was little use to attempt to face the wind now.

All they could do was to keep the vessel steady and look out for a collision with drift ice.

The nights were long sieges, with trying to keep the ship from being stove. The days were rigid battles against the careering blasts.

Then the sun disappeared below the horizon. The Antarctic night had begun.

There was no longer any hope of reaching northern waters that year.

Winter quarters was the order. In a remarkably brief space of time the tossing, turbulent sea had become a solid mass of pack ice.

And in the midst of this her timbers grinding and wrenching with the strain lay the Albatross.

But soon the ice pack became motionless as the fearful cold contributed to make it solid.

Thus fixed in her icy bed the Albatross was to remain a fixture for seven long dreary months.

It was by no means a pleasant outlook. Yet the crew proceeded to make the best of it.

The rations were carefully reckoned up.

It was found that only with the most frugal of indulgence would they last until spring.

But yet there was a chance that game might be procured to some extent. Even then, however, it was remembered that after the ice pack should break up it would be three months before they could hope to reach a port.

Therefore the outlook was serious indeed.

Added to this was the almost absolute certainty of sickness.

Scurvy already threatened various members of the crew. Yet they did not yield to despair.

It was a common conviction that the only hope of escape consisted in clinging together, and this they did.

There was no mutiny, no recriminations, no quarrels. It was a common cause, and life was its stake.

Soon the Antarctic winter with all its fearful rigors had set in.

But they were quite comfortable aboard the ship, grouping about the furnace by the light of the oil lamps.

Outside the cold was at times so severe as to have almost precluded a human being living in the open air a moment.

But there were many of these spells, and fortunately they were not of long duration.

At times the thermometer would go up with a rush and the air became quite mild.

At such times they dared to venture away from the ship.

Hunts were organized and as game came out from the

mainland to roam the ice pack there was always a chance of shooting something.

Foxes and rabbits, or Arctic hares were common. Occasionally an elk was seen, or a species of reindeer.

Seals were plenty, though rather difficult to hunt, and great flocks of ducks and geese at times flew over.

The party were getting along amazingly well when one day a fearful, thrilling catastrophe occurred.

Of course, none of the ship's crew had ever penetrated further south, and knew nothing of the Antarctic continent.

That it might be inhabited was possible, but there was no record.

In the Arctic, Esquimaux lived contiguous to the Pole.

But in the Antarctic human life had never been found existent. Yet this was no evidence that it did not exist.

One day Captain Hardy and Jack proposed to go on a seal hunt four miles away toward the open sea.

They took two of the seamen—Jerry Mains and Adolph Sturgeson—with them. This left Second Mate Albert Stearns and six seamen aboard the craft.

Of course, Lucille remained aboard.

It was a fatal day.

Arrived at the sealing grounds the first catastrophe occurred. It was one never to be forgotten.

A seal was lanced by Sturgeson, very near the edge of the pack. The creature was killed, as the sailor believed.

But as he ventured near it suddenly it turned and attacked him.

Before Sturgeson could get out of the way it had fastened one of its tusks through the calf of his leg.

He was held a prisoner, and the agony was so intense that he shrieked for aid. He was seen by all three of his companions.

"My God!" cried Jack Wallis, with the utmost horror. "Poor Sturgeson is done for!"

"Don't say that!" cried Captain Hardy, with anguish. "Save him!"

Jerry Mains was the nearest.

Seeing his companion in such deep trouble, he at once started for him. Out over the pack he ran.

The seal still hanging to his victim, was backing to the edge of the pack. A moment more and he would slide into the water.

Mains reached the spot the next moment. With a blow he killed the seal and then grasped Sturgeson's hands.

But at that moment a fearful thing happened.

The section of ice upon which they were suddenly snapped and broke away from the main pack.

It drifted out into the black water. All might have

been well even then had it not been for a phenomenon, almost always certain to occur.

There were huge, top-heavy peaks on the ice floe, which caused it to become unbalanced.

Suddenly it rocked violently, and then with a mighty vortex of waters keeled over and turned bottom side up, the heavy part of the berg sinking.

An awful cry of horror escaped Captain Hardy and Jack Wallis.

"My God, they are lost forever!" cried the young mate. This was certainly true.

The two unfortunate men never rose. The bed of the deep Antarctic was their final resting place.

There was no more seal hunting that day. The grief and horror of the two survivors can well be imagined.

There was nothing to do but to return to the Albatross and report the mishap.

So back toward the ship they started. But as they came in sight of it, Captain Hardy remarked a peculiar circumstance.

"That is queer!" he exclaimed. "There is no smoke from the galley pipes. What does it mean?"

"They cannot have let the fire go out!" cried Jack.

The two men exchanged startled glances. Without a word they pressed forward.

And as they drew nearer the ice-bound ship no one came out to greet them. No one answered Jack's hail.

All was as silent as death.

"What is the matter with them?" cried Captain Hardy. "Why on earth don't they answer?"

Forward they pushed rapidly.

When twenty yards from the ship Jack Wallis paused with an awful cry of terror.

"Look!" he shrieked.

There about the ship's gangway the snow had been fearfully trampled and it was a crimson color. Blood was the cause of this.

And upon the sides of the ship, upon the ladder and the rail all was blood. Over the rail Jack Wallis went.

And there upon the ship's deck he saw the rigid figure of a man frightfully mutilated and frozen stiff in the bitter air.

CHAPTER III.

THE AIRSHIP TO THE RESCUE.

"Dead!" he exclaimed, in hollow tones. "It is Martin Jones, foretopman. He has been murdered!"

Captain Hardy reeled toward the cabin door. His face was chalky white.

"Lucille!" he gasped.

The same thought was in Jack Wallis' mind. He followed at once.

The companionway was stained with blood, the cabin floor the same. On went the two hunters.

There by the galley fire, which was out, lay the stark and stiff forms of three more of the crew.

They were in positions to show that they had fought for their lives.

But where were the other two and Lucille?

"Mark Vane and Alvan Bates, with Lucille, are missing!" declared the excited captain. "What can have become of them?"

"There is but one theory."

"What?"

"They have been taken away as prisoners."

"As prisoners?"

"Yes."

"But by whom?"

"As yet I cannot answer. Human fiends, no doubt. See, the ship has been ransacked and many things carried away."

"You are right."

"I have an idea."

"What is it?"

"Below us lies the great continent?"

"Yes."

"I fancy it is inhabited by various tribes of savages who are hostile. They have come out on to the pack, hunting, and have found the ship."

"My God! and they have taken Lucille away, captive?"

"Yes."

For a moment tears of agony streamed down Captain Hardy's face.

Then he grasped Jack's hand.

"My boy," he said, in agony, "it is a fearful blow! Life is sped for me now. The Albatross will never see home again!"

"Don't give up."

"But how can it? How can we ever go back and leave Lucille here?"

"We will not!"

Jack Wallis' voice rang out with elation.

"I tell you we will rescue Lucille if we have to follow those wretches to the very heart of the Antarctic continent itself!"

"Brave boy!" cried Captain Hardy. "But will the ship be here? Can we find our way back?"

"We have our bearings. But I hope that we may overtake the wretches before they have gone very far."

"Then let us be off!"

"At once!"

"We will return and bury these poor fellows later."

"Yes; all depends upon prompt pursuit."

Leaving the ship, the two desperate men set out upon the trail. It was a broad and easy one to follow.

The air had moderated very much. Indeed, there was a faint mist creeping up from the sea.

The barbarians left huge footprints in the snow, and it was from these that Captain Hardy drew his deductions.

"I tell you they are literal giants!" he declared. "No doubt they are fearful fighters."

"Yet they cannot, one of them, stop a rifle ball without getting sick," said Jack.

"You are right, there!"

On through the snow for hours the two men followed the tracks.

All that day and the next they followed it. Happily they had taken the precaution to bring eatables.

A few hours' sleep in the snow was all the rest they got, but they were consoled with the cheerful fact that every moment the trail grew fresher.

And now, from the horizon line, there had arisen vast heights of snowy white. Towering yet above them all was a mighty peak, which sent forth flame and smoke.

"A volcano!" declared Captain Hardy. "I'll wager we will find the settlement of the barbarians not far from that."

"I think you may be very sure of it," declared Jack Wallis.

But as they drew nearer the coast line suddenly some startling incidents occurred.

Jack, who was in advance, suddenly halted.

A cry of alarm pealed from his lips.

At that moment they had been approaching a vast pile of conglomerated ice. Suddenly, from behind it, a number of strange-looking beings sprang forth.

They were gigantic in stature and dressed in skins, with the tusks of the seal for horns upon their head-dresses, which consisted of untanned seal hide, with holes for the eyes and mouth.

They were armed with huge battle clubs, with the bones of huge fish and huge rocks for heads, and javelins tipped with stone or fish bones.

At sight of the two men they came forward with a rush. Brandishing their weapons and yelling, they rushed forward.

It was a critical moment.

It was a question of life or death, and there seemed but one move for the two men to make.

"Aim low!" cautioned Captain Hardy. "Take the first man!"

Then their rifles spoke.

Two of the barbarians fell.

Fortunately our adventurers had good repeating Winchester, and they were enabled to keep up a good steady fire.

But the barbarians now began hurling their javelins. One nearly impaled Jack. This caused him to shout:

"This way, Captain Hardy! We must get shelter!"

Both retreated to the cover of some blocks of ice and the battle went on.

They pluckily held the foe at bay. But the barbarians seemed to become legion in number.

It seemed as if a hundred of them at least had appeared upon the scene from some mysterious source.

And now our adventurers made an appalling discovery.

This was that they had neglected to take sufficient ammunition from the ship with them. But a few more rounds of cartridges were left.

With blanched faces they looked at each other.

"My boy," said Captain Hardy, steadily, "I fear it is all up with us!"

"It looks so, captain."

"What an awful fate!"

"At least we will die game!"

Wallis shut his lips tightly and resumed the firing. He made every shot tell. But presently he found that he had but three cartridges left.

And the barbarians were every moment growing bolder. A hand-to-hand combat would be sure to be fatal.

A few moments more and they would certainly have overwhelmed the two brave men, had it not been for an intervention.

And this came from a most unexpected quarter.

Suddenly, what seemed like a veritable bolt of lightning dropped from the sky, and right among the barbarians.

There was a fearful explosion.

Tons of ice and snow rose to the height of fifty feet in the air. Dozens of the barbarians were torn in shreds.

Astounded, Jack and Captain Hardy looked up and beheld a sight the like of which they had never seen before.

"Great Neptune!" gasped the captain. "A ship sailing in the air!"

This was what it seemed.

But in place of sails were flapping wings. The hull was

of different shape. It was a ship, but not one intended for sailing the seas.

That it was not a supernatural apparition was evident, for at the rail were four men, all of them shouting encouraging words.

"Keep up, friends!" came down from above. "We will help you!"

"Ahoy!" gasped Captain Hardy, in amazement. "Who are you?"

"This is Frank Reade, Jr.'s airship, the Dart. We are Americans!"

"And so are we," replied Hardy. "I've commanded many a good ship in my life, but I never yet saw one that sailed in the air."

At this the aerial voyagers laughed.

"Wait and we will descend!" they cried.

Then the Dart settled rapidly until it alighted upon the ice. At the rail four men were standing.

One was a tall, handsome young man, another was short and wore glasses, one was an Irishman, and the fourth was a negro, as black as coal.

The reader, of course, recognizes them as Frank Reade, Jr., Barney and Pomp, and the scientist, Professor Gaston.

They had left home some six weeks previous and had enjoyed a first-class trip of eight thousand miles or more.

One thing was certain. They had arrived in the nick of time to save the lives of Captain Hardy and Jack.

Stories were soon exchanged. Frank Reade, Jr., listened with deep interest to the story of the whalers.

When he was told about Lucille's capture by the Antarctic natives he was at once aroused, and cried:

"She shall be rescued, and have no fear, Captain Hardy!"

"God bless you, sir!" cried the overjoyed captain. "Of course, you have it in your power to do so with your airship?"

"I believe so. At least we will try."

"Antarctic natives!" cried Professor Gaston, at once interested. "Well, that settles one important point, don't it, that the South Pole regions are inhabited?"

"It does!" agreed Frank. "And yonder are mountains and a volcano!"

The scientist was, however, just now interested in the barbarians.

A visit was made to the spot where the electric bomb had exploded.

Some of the primitive weapons of the barbarians were secured. Several of them had escaped mutilation and a look was taken at their features.

"Of the Aryan type!" declared Professor Gaston. "Bar-

barians in every sense of the word. The shape of the skull precludes anything but low intellect."

The remaining or surviving barbarians had vanished.

Where they had gone was something of a mystery. Certain it was they were not in sight anywhere.

It was decided to follow their trail as well as possible through the snow.

This was not difficult.

It was well-defined and broad.

For some ways the airship kept on.

Then the volcano and its attendant peaks drew nearer.

To the surprise of all it was seen that the slope of the volcanic mountain were devoid of snow.

What was more, there actually seemed to be vegetation upon it.

But this was probably in the form of Arctic messes and ferns, which grow in very barren places and even under the snow.

But as the airship now rapidly drew nearer to the volcano a startling discovery was made.

"Look!" cried Jack Wallis, in amazement. "The mountain is hollow!"

Indeed, the appearance of a mighty yawning cavity in its side seemed to warrant this assertion.

The volcano looked like a walnut shell cut in halves, with its side cut open.

CHAPTER IV.

THE HOLLOW MOUNTAIN.

Certainly the appearance of the volcanic mountain was unusual in the extreme. What did it mean?

Had internal fires burned it out and made of it a hollow cone? It certainly looked very much so.

But now another startling thing was seen. Into the vast cavity a large body of men were seen to be rushing.

"It is the home of the barbarians!" cried Professor Gaston, in amazement. "More and more wonderful!"

The aerial voyagers gazed upon the spectacle in sheerest wonder.

Into the mighty aperture rushed the Antarctic natives. In a few moments not one was in sight.

The airship now rapidly settled down at the foot of the volcano.

There was one resolute purpose in the minds of all.

They were determined to invade the curious dwelling place of the natives. It was a moral certainty that the white prisoners, Lucille and Mark Vane and Alvan Bates were therein confined.

This being the case, there was sufficient excuse for the invasion, for it was necessary to rescue them.

The airship descended until on a level with the cavernous opening. It could easily have sailed into the place, but Frank was afraid that collision with the roof might damage the wings or rotascope.

So he did not venture to enter.

But getting down on a level he turned the rays of the searchlight into the place. This revealed a curious sight.

A mighty open space, or perhaps it might be called cavern, occupied several acres in extent, and all roofed by the shell of the volcano.

But in the centre of this vast underground area was what looked like a lake of molten gold as it lay under the gleam of the searchlight.

However, Frank saw that it was nothing of the kind, but a vast basin of boiling lava.

A stream of the boiling liquid ran down into the basin from an orifice in the mountain wall.

The walls of the immense cavern were of hardened lava, apparently. It was certainly a queer freak of nature.

But this was not all.

The Antarctic natives had entered the place, but none of them were in sight.

Frank was in a position whence he could easily view the whole interior of the place.

But an explanation of their disappearance was easily obtained.

Just beyond the lava basin there was a dark, cavernous opening which appeared to trend downward.

Frank understood it all at once.

"I have it!" he cried. "This is only one of many caverns in this volcanic range. The whole region here doubtless is honeycombed by the action of currents of lava. Doubtless their retreat is deep down in the bowels of the earth."

Captain Hardy heard this with dismay.

"Then we can never hope to rout them out!" he said. "That will not be possible."

"On the contrary, I believe it is possible," said Frank.

"You do?"

"Yes."

"How will you do it?"

"Easiest thing in the world. Simply track them right into their den."

Captain Hardy shrugged his shoulders.

"You cannot go there with your airship," he said.

"Very true!"

"How then do you propose to go?"

"On foot."

"Merely! a handful of men like us will stand no show with such a myriad of foes, however insufficiently armed."

"How many of the natives do you reckon there are?" asked Frank.

"At least several thousand."

The young inventor was silent. He realized that there was logic in Captain Hardy's words.

But he was not to be defeated.

"Barney," he said, "go down and fetch up those long, black boxes in the forward cabin."

"All right, sir!"

The Celt disappeared at once.

When he returned he had two of the boxes on his shoulder. They were marked in plain black letters:

"PLAIN ARMOR."

"Armor!" exclaimed Captain Hardy. "Is that what you have there, Mr. Reade?"

"That is it," replied Frank.

"Merely on us! I supposed the days of armor and knight-hood had gone by."

"Neither have as yet," replied Frank, quietly. "I have four suits of this armor, and it is my own manufacture. Did you ever see anything better?"

As Frank said this he took from one of the boxes a shirt of mail.

The finest of steel meshes, intricately woven, and all as pliable as cloth. Such was the wonderful armor.

There was a suit from head to foot, including a helmet, with visor and skull cap. Truly it was wonderful workmanship.

"It is bullet proof," declared Frank. "Nothing ordinary can penetrate it."

"Wonderful!" cried Jack Wallis. "Why, with this armor one man could hold an army at bay."

"That he could," agreed Frank. "They might fire volleys at him. They could not kill him."

The suits of mail were carefully examined and admired. Then Frank said:

"You get into one, Wallis; and you, Captain Hardy, into the other. Pomp will remain with the machine. Barney, don this suit of mail and at once."

"All right, sir!" replied the Celt, who proceeded to obey.

"Then you propose to wear these suits of mail in attacking the natives?" asked Hardy.

"Certainly," replied Frank. "Thus equipped we can clean out the country. Ah, there is great work ahead for us!"

All were, of course, enthusiastic over the prospect.

It is needless to say that they were soon ready. Over the rail they went and stood upon the volcanic ground.

Pomp elevated the airship a few hundred feet for safety's sake, after they had gone. Then the four rescuers entered the hollow mountain.

As they did so they noted a peculiar vibration and at times a distant jarring, jolting sound as if machinery were at work beneath them.

And doubtless it was, but not machinery made by human hands.

The internal fires raging there, no doubt, caused the tremulous motion. Indeed, the atmosphere was charged with waves of heat, which was evidence enough in itself of that.

Entering the hollow mountain, the four mail-clad men skirted the lake of molten lava.

The heat from this was something not exactly pleasant to bear. They did not venture too near the edge.

Upon every hand was visible evidences of the great struggle of the volcanic elements in ages past.

It was a wonderful sight, and Professor Gaston made the best of it. He declared:

"I am the most fortunate man in America to-day to be enabled to be here. This is a wonderful experience!"

As the professor had not a suit of armor on it was decided that he should remain in the outer cavern where he would be very much safer.

He was anxious to search for specimens, and at the same time was not desirous of an encounter with the natives.

Leaving Professor Gaston in the outer cavern, Frank Reade, Jr., and his three companions boldly entered the subterranean passage which led presumably to the stronghold of the Antarctic natives.

To their surprise the passage was hardly a hundred feet in length.

Then they emerged upon a scene the like of which none of them had ever before beheld. It was wonderful.

They emerged upon a long gallery, from which they looked down into an internal crater full two hundred feet deep.

A mighty basin it was, covering acres with small islands of rock in a vast lake of fire and lava.

Great sheets of burning gas at times leaped a hundred feet into the air. Yet certain draughts of air made the gallery secure against the frightful heat.

For some while our explorers gazed upon the scene with wonder.

"Upon my word!" exclaimed Captain Hardy. "Inferno could not be worse than that!"

"You are right," agreed Frank. "Certainly it is akin to it."

"Begorra, I'd niver want to fall down there!" cried Barney, with a shiver. "Shure, it's moighty quick yez would come to nothing."

Nobody was disposed to contradict this logical statement. But Jack Wallis was impatient.

"If we are to save the eaptives I think we had better move," he said.

Everybody agreed to this, and they now pressed forward along the gallery.

For perhaps a hundred yards this followed a winding way, and suddenly a startling view burst upon the reseucers.

Daylight was visible just ahead, and now they emerged into a narrow and deep valley right among the peaks.

What was the most striking was that this valley was as green as an emerald, which, indeed, it seemed like in a rough setting of mighty jagged heights.

Vegetation flourished in this peculiar valley. There were larches, cedars and spruces, and a peeculiar sort of grass interspersed with moss turfed the valley.

This was the home of the Antarctic people. Truly it was a remarkable speectacle.

For many weeks none in the party had gazed upon aught but the white waste of snow and ice.

The green valley now seemed to partly blind them, and, indeed, it was some while before any could take in its appointments in full.

Then they saw that a small settlement of stone houses was near at hand.

Beyond was another, larger, and in the midst of it was one large building covering fully an acre.

It looked as if the Antaretie natives had expected the attack, for they were gathered about their huts with arms ready for battle.

At sight of the white men they set up a fearful yelling, and danned about, brandishing their weapons.

"They mean to give us a warm reception, don't they?" cried Frank. "Now where do you suppose the prisoners are?"

"Probably in that large building," said Hardy, with conviction; "that seems to be the stronghold of the tribe."

"What shall we do? Make an open attack?" asked Jack Wallis.

"First let us see if we cannot treat with them," said Frank.

But this was quickly proved out of the question.

The words had barely left his lips when there was a startling sound in his rear.

Instantly from behind rocks and shrubs a score of armed barbarians sprang forth and rushed upon our adventurers like an avalanche.

Swinging their battle axes they looked formidable indeed. The white men had barely time to prepare for defense, so sudden and swift was the murderous attack.

CHAPTER V.

THE ALBATROSS RELEASED.

Frank Reade, Jr., saw at once how useless it was to attempt to treat with the ignorant horde.

It was folly to think of such a thing. Murder was in their hearts and the only way to wipe it out was to give them battle.

So the young inventor cried:

"Look out, friends! Stand by and don't let them get to close quarters!"

The barbarians hurled their javelins with vengeful aim.

Some of them went true to the mark. But the points being only of flint or fish bone were easily turned against the armor of the white men.

So that the white men in this respect held a great advantage.

They fired almost point blank with their Winchesters. Several of the natives dropped dead.

But this did not deter them. Charging with such blind fury the battle could not help but be brought to close quarters.

And here it seemed for a moment as if the barbarians would win.

With their heavy battle clubs, which they swung above their heads with fearful force, they dealt terrible blows.

The armor resisted the point of the axe, but the concussion was something likely to prove almost as fatal. The guns of the whitemen were but frail guards.

The only way to do was to keep up a running fire and retreat before the terrible blows. This scattered the fighters, and at the same time made the outlook bad for the white men.

Indeed, for a time it began to look serious enough for them.

But at this moment Frank Reade, Jr., chanced to glance upward.

He saw that the airship had drifted over the peaks and was now above the valley. Even as he looked he saw Pomp at the rail.

Instantly Frank signaled to him.

The astute darky was not long in grasping the situation. Professor Gaston was now on board with him, having been picked up by Pomp.

"Golly!" gasped the darky, "I done fink dat Marse Frank am in a bad scrape. Jes' yo' hol' on dar, Marse Gaston. I'se gwine to fix dem chaps pretty quick!"

"Mercy on us!" cried the professor, "our men are in great danger."

"Dat dey are, sir!"

Pomp rushed into the cabin and brought out a dynamite bomb, an invention of Frank Reade, Jr.'s. This he dropped right in the midst of the barbarians.

Instantly there was a terrific explosion. Fully a dozen of the wretches were blown into eternity.

Then the airship began to descend.

The barbarians seemed to have acquired a fearful terror of the airship. At sight of it now they beat an inglorious retreat.

Up the valley they rushed, in headlong haste. The Dart descended until within one hundred feet of the ground.

"All right, Pomp!" cried Frank, "hold right where you are. We are going to invade that big, stone building. Be ready to give us help!"

"A'right, Marse Frank!" replied Pomp, readily.

The victorious explorers now charged the barbarians' settlement. They deserted their houses and fled incontinently.

Reaching the massive stone structure they dashed through a high arched doorway and found themselves in a long passage.

This proved to be a perfect labyrinth, but finally the rescuers came out in a high walled room in the centre of the structure.

And here, sitting upon the stone floor and bound hand and foot, were the three prisoners.

Lucille was pale but brave, and at sight of the rescuers gave a great cry of joy.

The next moment her bonds were cut and she was in her father's arms, unharmed.

It was a joyful reunion, and among the happy ones was Jack Wallis.

The looks given each other by the young lovers were of the warmest description.

The airship had descended now, and Professor Gaston was exploring the huts of the barbarians.

"A strange race!" he declared. "Unlike any other on the face of the earth."

He collected much valuable data and many specimens. Then all returned to the deck of the airship.

The gratitude of the Albatross' people to Frank Reade, Jr., was of the most intense description.

"We can never forget your kindness!" they declared.

"But for your aid we would never have effected the rescue, and we should all have met death."

"But what are your plans now?" asked Frank, with interest.

"We must return to the Albatross."

"And then——"

"Winter here and with the first thaw in the spring sail for home."

"But you have no crew!"

"That is true," replied Captain Hardy. "We shall be short handed. Yet if none of us die in the meanwhile the four of us could sail the ship home."

"Yet it will be a terrible experience for you to pass the winter upon the scene of that fearful massacre," said Frank. "Don't you think the ice pack could be broken up?"

"Ah!" cried Captain Hardy, eagerly. "If we could have made headway against the wind for only two miles more we should have been in the open sea!"

"So I thought," said Frank. "You are right in the edge of the pack. It should not be difficult to get a channel through."

But Captain Hardy shook his head.

"Too much ice!"

"If you could reach the open sea you could get north, couldn't you?"

"Oh, yes! the current has already set northward," replied the captain.

"Then have courage," cried Frank, "for I will pull you out of the hole!"

The captain was amazed.

"You?"

"Yes."

"But—how?"

"Wait and you shall see."

The airship took its flight from the volcanic valley, leaving the terrified barbarians to themselves.

As straight as the birds could fly the Dart returned to the spot where the Albatross was nipped in the ice.

Then a descent was made.

The first move was to reverently bury the victims of the massacre and restore things to order aboard the ship.

Then Frank took a quick and comprehensive survey of the ice pack.

He saw that the Albatross lay between two ridges of block ice. It would take a century to dig a channel through with pick and shovel.

But this was not what Frank proposed to do.

He carefully obtained the lay of the ice pack. Then Barney and Pomp began drilling holes four feet deep in the ice.

A line of these holes were drilled at intervals of ten feet, the whole distance of two miles to the open sea.

Then dynamite bombs were placed in them and connected with a wire aboard the airship.

Frank pressed the electric key, and a terrific explosion followed. Tons of ice rose in the air and was hurled aside.

A literal channel was made the entire distance of two miles to the open sea. It now only remained to clear this of ice.

The crew of the Albatross cheered with delight at the prospect. The ship lay in the channel freed of ice.

But now to the gratification of every one the ice began to move out of the channel of its own accord.

The reason for this was that the Antarctic current had set to the northward and was carrying it along.

In a very few hours the channel was wholly clear.

It now only remained to get the ship out of it and into the open sea.

As there was not seaway in the channel, sail could not be made. But Frank solved the problem.

A line was carried from the ship's bow a mile ahead and the airship was lowered and anchored firmly. Then the electric engines were set to work and one of the propellers was utilized as a drum to wind the line up on.

The engines of the airship, though delicate, were powerful, and in a very short time the ship had been towed to the end of the channel.

Here sail was made and the Albatross stood away to the northward.

Captain Hardy, Jack Wallis and Lucille stood upon the quarter deck and waved a farewell to the aerial voyagers.

"I am so glad that we were enabled to render them such a service," said Frank. "It well repays me for my Antarctic trip."

"Certainly. You have done a good deed," declared Professor Gaston, warmly.

"Now for the South Pole!"

"Hurrah!"

Barney and Pomp set about their duties with a vim.

They were bosom friends and yet each was engaged in constant nagging at the other. Many were the practical jokes they played upon each other.

"Hi, dar, yo' big I'ishman!" cried Pomp, in an imperious way, "why don' yo' shine up dat brasswo'k in de engine-room?"

"Begorra, an' phwy don't yez make us some bread we kin ate?" retorted Barney, facetiously. "Shure, the last I got hold of was that hard that I cudn't break it wid a sledge-hammer."

"Huh! I done fink yo' am pooty sassy, I'ish. Jes' s'pose yo' makes yo' own bread fo' awhile."

"Bejabers, I'll do it!"

"Yo' will?"

"Yis, to be shure!"

"How am yo' gwine to do it?"

"I'll show yez!"

But Pomp blocked the galley door.

"No, yo' don' do anyfing ob de kin'! I done reckon I know wha' yo' want in here. Yo' jest mix my fings all up an' den Marse Frank gib me a jawing."

"But yez wanted me to make me own bread. Now, gimme a chance."

"I'll gib yo' a chaine to see stars, honey, if yo' don't go on about yo' own biz!"

This excited Barney's ire.

The mere allusion to a fight was enough for him. He was more than ready and willing.

In an instant he bristled up.

"Oh, it's fight yez want!" he cried, spitting on his hands. "Shure, I'm jist the lad that kin accomodate yez. Whur-roo!"

"Look yer, I'ish," said Pomp, solemnly, "does yo' see de color ob my eye?"

"Begorra, it'll be blacker than it is now afore I get through wid it!" spluttered Barney.

"Does yo' mean to hit me, chile?"

"If yez don't apologize!"

"Wha' fo'?"

"Fer insultin' me, bejabers!"

"Gwan away. I neber 'sulted yo'."

"Bejabers, that's a loie! Here's wan fer luck!"

With this Barney made a swoop at the darky. Pomp easily dodged it, however, and retreated a step.

Barney came at him again, hammer and tongs. At once Africa's blood arose.

"G'way now, yo' sassy I'ishman, if yo' knows what's good fo' yo'se'f. Whoop dar! Look out fo' yo'se'f!"

With this down went Pomp's woolly head. Forward he shot like a battering ram. The result was comical enough.

CHAPTER VI.

IN THE MIDST OF A STORM.

Pomp's head took Barney full in the stomach.

The Celt was propelled across the cabin floor like a

stone out of a catapult, and landed with a terrific crash clear under his own bunk. For a moment he was stunned and utterly unable to tell where he was or what had happened.

Pomp did not follow up his victory.

His anger was gone in a moment.

He simply stood still and laughed until the tears ran down his black cheeks and his sides heaved like bellows.

Then he went back into his galley and to his bread making.

Slowly and soberly Barney picked himself up. He said nothing, but went slowly and sadly away.

It seemed a code of honor between the two that hostilities were to cease the very moment one or the other came off victorious.

In this case Pomp was the winner.

But it was not always so. Very often Barney was best man. Indeed, honors were evenly divided.

The airship now took its southward course.

The first move was to accurately locate the South Pole, explore some of the frozen regions, take general observations, and then set a northward course for the frigid zone of the Arctic.

Thus far Professor Gaston was delighted with the result of the trip.

"Even if we never reach the other pole," he declared, "we have accomplished enough now to place our names high upon the scroll of fame."

But Frank said:

"Have no fear, professor. We are going to reach the Arctic and make what is really a circumnavigation of the globe."

"And all the way in the air!" cried the professor. "Most wonderful of experiences is this!"

Vast areas of frozen country were passed over. Days of sailing above this desolate waste followed.

And every day Professor Gaston took a new observation. Every day he declared that they were growing nearer the Pole.

"I have a great curiosity," he declared. "You know it is a commonly accepted belief that the region about the South Pole is very open and warm. That in fact ice does not exist there at all!"

"I believe that is true," declared Frank. "The most extensive volcanic region in the world, I believe, lies adjacent to the South Pole."

"We shall see."

One morning, or rather just as the explorers had risen,

for it was the latter part of the Antarctic night of six long months, Barney spied a strange scene ahead.

Mighty mountain ranges showed, rising to fearful heights, and all were devoid of ice or snow.

Indeed, several of them appeared to be active volcanoes.

At once the Celt gave the alarm.

Everybody piled on deck, and Professor Gaston seemed the most excited of any.

"Hurrah!" he cried. "At last we have reached the South Pole. In place of an open sea as in the Arctic, we have mighty volcanic mountains."

The Dart rapidly neared the mountain range. And as it did so, beyond them was revealed a wonderful sight.

As far as the eye could reach all was a fertile valley of green. Indeed, small lakes dotted this region, and there were rivers and forests.

"The Polar country!" cried Gaston, with excitement. "Surely it is a wonderful discovery. Is it inhabited?"

The airship slowly sailed over the mountain peaks. Suddenly Gaston pointed to a tall one and declared.

"That is the South Pole, or at least it is exactly upon the spot where the pole should be!"

Over the Antarctic country the airship drifted.

There was a most remarkable change in the atmosphere. In place of the stinging cold there was a soft mildness which bore a strange resemblance to furnace heat.

Hundreds of miles in area was the fertile country of the South Pole.

Various animals were seen, but in all the three hundred miles of sailing across the fertile and warm area our voyagers saw nothing of human beings.

However, Gaston declared:

"It is but a small part we have explored as yet. They may exist in some other section. Our sole object now is to locate the two poles. Some other time we may be able to more extensively explore each. Eh, Mr. Reade?"

"That is agreeable to me," replied Frank. "Indeed, we have not come prepared for a very long sojourn in this region."

So the Dart crossed the Polar region as quickly as possible.

Straight across the region they went, until once more the circular range of mountains was crossed, and the region of ice and snow again was spread to view.

"We have crossed the South Pole," declared Frank Reade, Jr., and we have started northward for home. Now, we may proceed with more of leisure. I am anxious to take a look at some of the countries we pass over, notably Africa."

"I am more than agreeable," declared Professor Gaston. "In fact, it is your pleasure, Mr. Reade."

Straight to the northward the course was now held.

No incident worthy of record occurred. The same unvarying monotony of ice and snow continued for many days.

Then there came a noticeable change in the atmosphere. The sun became visible above the horizon.

And as the airship sped on the ice and snow began to disappear and the open sea came into view.

Still northward the airship sped, until Kerguelen Land was sighted. Due north was Australia.

Not having any desire to go thither, Frank changed the course of the airship to the northwest.

This brought them over tempestuous seas, and in these latitudes the airship encountered a terrific storm.

It was the means of nigh causing the wreck of the Dart.

The voyagers were all in the cabin at dinner.

The wheel had been lashed and the Dart was traveling at a fair rate of speed.

Suddenly something like an explosion brought every man to his feet.

The next moment they were hurled about the cabin like puppets.

"My God!" cried Professor Gaston, in mortal terror. "The airship is falling!"

"Steady!" shouted Frank. "We must reach the wheel!"

But all was utter darkness. It seemed as if ten thousand fiends had the Dart in hand and was tossing it about like a puppet.

Caught in the arms of the storm, the airship was whirled aloft to dizzy heights, and no doubt would have been torn to pieces had it not been for a favorable accident.

Frank Reade, Jr., had been hurled to the floor of the cabin and was unable for a moment to stand on his feet.

None of the others could reach the pilot-house.

Indeed, it was lucky that none of them reached the deck.

They could not have remained there a moment.

The horror of the situation can easily be imagined when it is remembered that all was utter darkness and the voyagers were groping about the cabin in the most fearful of uncertainty.

"My God!" gasped Frank, in utter horror, "we are lost!"

There was no expectation but that the rigging would be wrecked and they would be dashed into the sea.

A fearful death by drowning would be certain in that event.

But a lucky accident saved the airship and the lives of all on board.

The fearful shock of the wind had caused the rotascope lever to fly open. In a moment the full current was on.

The rotascope revolved for all it was worth. This steadied the airship and caused it to shoot upward with fearful rapidity.

This saved the day. Up, whirling higher and higher went the Dart. Suddenly the wind ceased, sunlight was all about, and the airship rode in quiet air.

But she was shooting upward with frightful velocity.

Frank sprang out on the deck. He saw how things were at once.

Far below thundered and bellowed the black clouds of the storm. The airship had risen above it.

The joy of the aerial voyagers knew no bounds.

First, though, Frank made a careful examination of every part of the ship. To his amazement not a thing was broken.

"All safe and sound!" he cried, joyfully. "I tell you it was a narrow escape!"

"Luck is with us!" declared Professor Gaston.

As soon as possible Frank checked the flying rotascope.

If he had not done so the airship would soon have reached an altitude where it would be painful to breathe.

As soon as the storm had passed the Dart was once more allowed to descend.

No other incident worthy of note occurred until one morning Barney from the pilot-house shouted:

"Land ho!"

At once Frank and the professor were on deck with powerful glasses. A few moments of study revealed the character of the distant land.

It was the southern coast of Africa, and soon the settlement of Cape Town could be seen.

White-sailed ships were in the bay, and as they passed a few thousand feet above the town it could be seen that there was much excitement below.

The people were out in force, and were shouting and waving banners. But Frank Reade, Jr., had no intention of making a stop.

"Not this time!" he declared. "I have other matters on hand. Besides, it would be hardly safe to land there."

"Safe!" ejaculated Gaston, in amazement. "Why not?"

"Easy enough. A vast concourse of people like that are apt to lose their heads and do the airship much damage."

"That could not be among civilized people!"

They are the most to be feared as they cannot keep their hands off knowing well the nature of the machine. Superstitious fear keeps the savage at a safe distance."

"Upon my word I believe you are right!" cried the professor. "Though it never occurred to me that way before."

So the airship did not stop at Cape Town. Keeping on rapidly it passed over a populous and fertile tract of country.

For several days the Dart kept on its rapid northward flight.

The country had changed.

Vast wilds extended as far as the eye could reach, populated with savages and wild tribes.

Wild beasts could be seen in great numbers from the airship's deck.

Barney and Pomp were spoiling for an African hunt, so Frank decided to gratify their desire and make a brief stop.

CHAPTER VII.

THE LION HUNT.

Frank selected a charming little glade in a wild tract of forest near the banks of a river.

Here he made descent.

The airship rested upon the ground, and the travelers were all glad enough to get out and stretch their legs after the long journey in air.

But first the Dart was securely anchored to make sure that she did not go off of a sudden and leave them.

Then Barney and Pomp brought out their elephant rifles.

"Now for sport!" cried Frank. "I presume though, professor, you would prefer to do something else."

"I will remain near the airship and amuse myself," replied the scientist. "Yonder is a rare species of butterfly I want."

Leaving him to pursue the winged beauty, Frank, with Barney and Pomp, set out upon their hunt.

In a very short time they were deep in the forest and having rare sport.

Game was almost too plentiful.

The abundance of pheasants and hares almost took the edge off of the sport. The trio were soon loaded down.

But, as was natural, they now began to consider the feasibility of bagging larger game.

Even as they were discussing this an elephant was heard trumpeting in the distance, and at that moment Frank caught sight of some tracks in the soft soil.

"A lion has been this way!" he declared. "We could not find greater sport than that."

"Bejabers, I'm wid yez!" cried Barney.

"Huh! Don't be so brave!" sniffed Pomp. "Did yo' ever the baste!"

"Bejabers, no! But me ancisters hunted the Irish elk," retorted Barney. "Don't yez be so smart to think ye're in yez own counthry."

But Frank had already taken the lion's trail.

For some distance it could be plainly followed. Then Frank shrewdly guessed the truth.

"The animal was going for water," he declared. "If we hide somewhere hereabouts he will pass this way again."

They had come out upon the verge of a wide, grassy plain.

But a pile of bowlders near afforded a good hiding place as well as a rampart. Here they waited.

Frank knew enough about lions to know that this was the safest way to hunt them.

The hunters had not to wait long.

Suddenly a sound came from the forest which almost made the ground tremble. It gave our hunters a mighty start.

It was the roar of a lion. The king of beasts was near.

"Sh!" exclaimed Frank, in a whisper. "Don't let him see you!"

The next moment the monster came in sight.

And he was a monster. A larger specimen our friends had never seen. He stood just in the verge of the woods.

For a moment he sniffed the air as if he scented his foes. Then he came slowly along the path.

It was evident that he was going down to the river for water.

He would surely pass within twenty yards of the hunters. They were all in readiness. It was a critical moment.

Now the lion was just opposite.

Frank raised his rifle and took very careful aim. He made the beast's side just back of the shoulder the mark, hoping to reach the heart.

Then he pulled the trigger.

However, a movement upon the lion's part caused the ball to strike in the shoulder. The animal leaped in the air and came down facing the covert from which the shot had come.

"Look out!" cried Frank. "He's coming! Take careful aim!"

There was need of this. With a roar which was deafening the lion made a forward spring.

But he never reached the covert.

Barney and Pomp fired almost in the same moment. One or both bullets struck a vital part, for the beast rolled over upon the ground and lay motionless.

"Whurroo!" yelled Barney, delightedly. "We've killed the baste!"

And he was about to dash out of the covert, when Frank clutched his arm.

"Hold on!" cried the young inventor.

"Yis, sor."

"Don't be reckless. There may be a mate to that fellow near."

The warning was well timed. Indeed, a frightful roar was heard, and from another thicket a second lion bounded forth.

This was too much for Barney. He subsided at once and was submissive as a lamb.

The second lion seemed fiercer and larger than the first. The beast remained for some moments stationary, but roaring and lashing its tail.

Then suddenly it began to advance until quite near its mate's side. The scent of the blood was enough.

With long strides the monster came straight for the covert where the hunters were confined.

Frank had just time to shout:

"Look out! He is coming!"

Then the beast was upon them.

The three rifles cracked almost at point-blank range. But what was most singular was the fact that not one bullet took effect.

The lion came on and straight over the pile of bowlders.

It had already become evident that the hunters might expect a close encounter. This was a thrilling exigency to face.

"Whurroo!" shouted Barney, wildly. "Luk out fer yer-selves ivery wan! Shure, the baste is roight here!"

This was the truth.

The next moment the lion was over the bowlders. Again the hunters fired. But either the bullets went wide or did not strike a vital part.

The lion came on, just the same.

He struck Barney full force. The Celt went down as if struck by a thunderbolt. The lion, however, was unable to check his momentum.

He slipped and slid on the rocks for some yards. The quick presence of mind of Frank Reade, Jr., saved the day.

The young inventor raised his rifle quick as a flash and fired again.

This time the bullet went to the mark. It took effect in the lion's vitals, and the battle was quickly over.

The huge beast tumbled in a heap. Barney was instantly upon his feet.

"Begorra, I niver got such a basting as that afore!" he grumbled, rubbing his arm. "Shure, the crather nigh kilt me."

"We can congratulate ourselves upon a very lucky escape," declared Frank. "There was little chance for us. If the lion had closed his jaws upon any one of us it would have been a serious matter."

It was decided to strip the noble beasts of their skins, and then return to the airship.

The hunt had proved a glowing success, and all were well satisfied.

It did not take Barney and Pomp long to flay the lions. They were magnificent skins, and would make beautiful robes when properly dressed.

Upon returning to the Dart, Professor Gaston was found busily arranging some botanical specimens.

He listened to the account of the lion hunt with interest.

"There are plenty of sportsmen in America," he declared, "who would give a large sum for the sport you have just enjoyed, could they purchase it. You are fortunate."

As nothing was to be gained by lingering longer in the vicinity, Frank caused the Dart to rise and the journey was resumed.

Once more the airship was speeding over the African wilds.

The next day they came in sight of a mighty lake.

"Albert Nyanza Lake!" declared Frank. "One of the sources of the Nile."

Professor Gaston was much interested, and took notes of the event. Other lakes were crossed, and the Mountains of the Moon were sighted.

Then the airship bore away to the northeastward. It was Frank's purpose now to reach the North Pole in the quickest possible time.

Days passed into weeks.

Still the Dart kept on across the Indian Ocean, over India, and the summits of the Himalayas.

Then came Indo-China and the Siberian country. The Steppes were passed over and finally the shores of the Arctic were reached in the vicinity of the delta of the Lena river.

Here it was deemed best to make a descent, as the engines of the Dart had been running so long at such pressure that they really needed attention.

So a descent was made at the verge of a small plateau, which was thickly covered with Arctic firs.

"From here," said Frank, "we shall proceed directly over the Arctic Ocean and locate the North Pole inside of a month. Then we can go home."

"After a most successful trip!" declared Professor Gaston, enthusiastically.

"Do not say that as yet," said Frank. "We have not reached the end of our journey as yet."

"Still you do not apprehend any serious times in locating the North Pole, do you? Are not all of the natives friendly?"

"Possibly," replied Frank, "but there are very many

perils to consider. At any moment some accident might happen to the airship and we would then be in a bad fix."

"Ugh! don't speak of it!" said the professor, shrugging his shoulders. "I don't like to think of it."

Barney and Pomp were for a time very busy in overhauling the machinery of the Dart.

Some of the bearings had to be replaced and there were many little repairs that occupied a couple of days.

Then all rested from their labors on the third day, which was the Sabbath. A quiet day was made of it and the arrangement was that the start was to be made the next morning.

Barney was the first abroad and was quickly made acquainted with an incident which thrilled him greatly.

The river was but a few yards distant. He walked leisurely down to the shore to get a bucket of water when he heard a cry for help.

It was rendered in a foreign tongue which he did not understand. Barney looked up in amazement and saw drifting down on the current of the river a raft upon which was a half-naked man.

A fearful specimen of humanity he was, and Barney gazed at him in stupefaction.

"Mither av mercy!" he gasped. "Phwativer can it be?"

Indeed there was good cause for Barney's horrified remark.

The occupant of the raft was a powerful-framed man, evidently a Russian, with full beard and long straggling locks.

His face was ghastly white and he clung feebly to the raft and waved his arms wildly.

Above his waist he was naked, and to one wrist was fastened a manacle. He was evidently nigh starved and half dead from exposure.

"Whist there!" shouted Barney. "Who the mischief are yez?"

The man replied, but it was in the Russian tongue which the Celt did not understand.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE ESCAPED EXILE.

But the Celt saw from the fellow's action what he wanted, and that this was a rope to assist him to get ashore.

Now Barney had not one at hand, but he shouted:

"Howld an an' I'll get a rope. Shure, I'll help ye!"

And away went the whole-souled Irishman back to the airship.

The raft was drifting very slowly so he had plenty of time.

But when he reached the Dart his first move was to sound the alarm. Very quickly all hands were on deck.

"What's the matter?" asked Frank, who came up with his rifle in his hand.

"Shure, sor, there's a poor divil out there on a raft as wants help!" cried Barney.

"On a raft?"

"Yis, sor."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Professor Gaston. "Let us hasten to his relief!"

Frank Reade, Jr., was only half dressed, but he did not wait to complete his toilet. He went over the rail like a flash and with Barney rushed down to the river.

The Celt had brought a long rope with him. The raft had drifted nearer the shore.

Frank had a smattering of Russian among his varied accomplishments, and he shouted to the fellow:

"Who are you, and how came you here?"

"I am Nicolas Nafetodi, good sir," was the reply. "Oh, give me food, but for the love of God do not take me back to that fearful prison!"

"Ah!" cried Frank. "Then you are a convict?"

"Sentenced to exile for a crime of which I am not guilty!" replied the poor fellow. "Have mercy upon me!"

"You are right we will!" cried Frank, who was well familiar with the peculiarities of Russian justice.

"Have courage, my friend!"

"Bejabers, hang on to the rope!"

Barney swung it aloft and sent it circling out into the river. It fell with accuracy across the raft.

The exile grasped it and in a few moments the raft was pulled to the shore. He staggered up the river bank.

Certainly he was an object of pity at that moment. Wretched, disheveled and pallid he looked a fit subject for a hospital.

The voyagers would have been heartless indeed to have refused him aid.

For aught they knew he might be a hardened criminal. But Frank Reade, Jr., took a good look at his face and decided vastly in his favor.

There were honest lines in it which he knew could not belie the owner's nature.

So Nicolas Nafetodi was led to the airship and Pomp procured food for him.

He ate ravenously, and then being much refreshed told his story. It was indeed a pitiful one.

"My father," he said, "was a well-to-do merchant in St. Petersburg. I was favored with plenty of money from an

inheritance and formed the acquaintance of many wealthy youths of my own age.

"I will not make the story long, but suffice it to say that I had trouble with one who belong to the nobility.

"We loved Olga Nanarovitch, the daughter of Prince Nanarovitch. She favored my suit and from that hour Count Pietro Valdstedt was my sworn foe.

"In an unwary moment I was decoyed into the house of a Nihilist. Before I could take my departure the police descended upon the place and I was taken with the rest.

"I was thrown into prison. Valdstedt hired villains to swear to forged evidence against me. My trial was in secret, and I was not allowed the assistance of friends.

"I was banished for conspiracy against the Czar. It was the vilest wrong ever done any living man.

"But I had no redress. For eight long years I have been a slave at convict labor, with chains to bind me, and almost starvation as my reward.

"I have endured tortures until a month since I managed to escape.

"I made a raft and drifted down the Lena. I knew not—I cared not—where it took me so long as it was away from that hated prison.

"But even now I know that the hounds of the prison are after me. They have crossed the country to intercept me, and may be upon me at any moment. Before God I pray you, if you have not hearts of stone, do not give me up to them!

"I am innocent of the crimes charged against me as God in heaven knows! I beg of you to have mercy upon me!"

The fervid appeal reached the heart of every one of the voyagers.

Frank interpreted the story to them, and then taking the poor wretch's hand, said:

"They shall never take you while we live. We believe your story and will aid you."

The poor fellow burst into tears. He fairly embraced Frank in his joy.

"Surely there will be a reward for you up there," he said, devoutly, pointing upward. "You will not be punished for helping the poor convict."

Barney procured some decent clothes for the escaped exile. Then Frank said:

"Now in what way can we best give you aid? What are your plans or desires?"

"I wish to get back to St. Petersburg," replied Nicolas.

"But will you not fall again into the hands of the law?"

"Ah, but I will not be there an hour before I will have the necessary evidence to clear the stain from my name."

"Do you believe that?"

"I know it."

"Then, upon my word," cried Frank, "I will take you back to St. Petersburg in my airship!"

The Russian exile looked surprised.

"How?" he asked.

Frank repeated the assertion. Nicolas looked mystified until Frank explained to him the workings of the famous airship.

The Russian listened with wonderment. Indeed he was almost incredulous.

"And you have come across Siberia in that?" he asked.

"More than that. Completely around the world," replied Frank.

Nicolas drew a deep breath.

"You Americans are wonderful people," he declared. "Anything is possible to you!"

"I suppose your love, Olga, is lost to you by this time," declared Frank. "The other fellow has probably won her."

Nicolas drew himself up.

"Ah, you do not know the depth of Russian love!" he declared. "Olga is still true to me. Only three months ago I heard from her, and that she was spending her fortune to get evidence to clear me."

"Noble woman!" replied Frank. "I trust she will succeed."

"But if I could only be there myself!" cried the exile, with inspiration, "I would surely succeed."

"You shall go there!" declared Frank. "I give you my word for it."

But at that moment the exile gave a sharp, gasping cry and retreated to the side of the airship.

"My God!" he gasped. "St. Nicholas defend me! There are the human hounds that seek my life!"

He pointed to the west, where the plateau merged into the plain. The voyagers beheld a thrilling sight.

A body of mounted men were approaching at full gallop. They rode fleet Kighis ponies and were dressed in the uniform of the Siberian police.

For a moment the voyagers stood watching the horsemen.

Then the words of the exile aroused Frank Reade, Jr., to action.

"For the love of God, do not deliver me up to my enemies!" the Russian cried. "I will be your slave if you will save me!"

"I don't know whether they can make an international affair out of this or not!" cried Frank. "I don't want to create war between this barbarous country and America."

but by my soul I shall not allow them to take this man away! Barney, go into the pilot-house!"

The Celt instantly obeyed.

The others armed themselves with Winchesters. Thus they stood by the airship's rail as the Siberian police came up.

"What ho!" cried the leader, a tall, bewhiskered fellow, reining in his horse at sight of Nicolas, "there is your man, guards! Seize the dog and iron him!"

The fellow spoke in the Russian language. Every word was plain to Frank Reade, Jr.

The unfortunate exile covered by the airship's rail. The guards would have seized him, but Frank said, quietly:

"Stand firm! Aim!"

Barney was in the door of the pilot house with his rifle at his shoulder. Frank, Pomp and Professor Gaston each held a rifle aimed at the foe.

At this the guards halted.

"Back!" thundered Frank in Russian, "or every dog of you dies!"

For a moment the Russian captain sat his horse like a statue. Then he cried, in amazement:

"What! You dare to defy the Czar?"

"I owe no allegiance to the Czar, nor do I stand in fear of his minions!" replied Frank, resolutely.

"Who are you?"

"We are Americans."

"Then know you that you are upon the Czar's territory. You shall surrender the prisoner or we shall fight!"

"We will fight, then!" declared Frank, sternly. "So long as we have blood in our veins we will defend this poor wretch. This may be the Czar's territory, but when the prisoner is on the deck of the airship he is under the protection of the American flag, and that flag the United States will never permit Russia nor any other foreign country to outrage."

The Russian officer could not reply to this sweeping declaration for some moments. He knew enough of international law to know that Frank Reade, Jr., was technically right.

"Nevertheless," he said, gritting his teeth, savagely, "you are a good ways from America, and your fate would never be known. Unless you surrender the prisoner we will shoot every one of you."

"Is that your craven threat?" asked Frank.

"You have heard it."

"Then I will answer it with another. I will give you three minutes to vacate your present position. If not, we will shoot every one of you!"

Frank's tone was firm and his manner resolute. The

Russian officer saw this. For a moment he was at a loss what to say or do.

It was likely, however, that he would have given the order to attack and blood would have been shed had it not been for an incident.

Suddenly a loud cry came from the direction of the plateau. Two horsemen were seen riding at full speed.

They wore the blood-red uniform of the Czar's service. Instantly a cry escaped the Russian officer's lips.

"Couriers of the Czar!" he cried. "What can they want?"

Hostilities were suspended for the time. Everybody watched the approach of the couriers, and the exile leaned forward with open mouth and half eager gaze.

"God be with us!" he murmured. "It may be Olga's reprieve!"

The next moment the couriers of the Czar reined in their smoking steeds. They saluted, and the foremost asked:

"Are you Ivan Petrowsky, of the Irkutsh Prison?"

CHAPTER IX.

OUT OF EXILE—BARNEY'S JOKE.

The Russian officer of the guard saluted and made reply:

"I am he. What have you?"

"We are from Moscow. We have traveled day and night to reach you with a message from the Czar."

At once the prison captain drew himself up with dignity and importance.

"I will read it," he said, pompously.

One of the couriers tendered him a document. He read it to himself and his brow cleared. Then he said:

"Nicolas Mafetodi, I have to say that his most gracious majesty, the Czar, has sent you full and absolute pardon. It has been discovered that you are innocent of the charge brought against you. Count Valdstedt has confessed."

"Olga!" murmured the exile, with a light of delirious happiness in his eyes. Then it faded and he reeled back.

He fell to the ground like a log. Instantly all rushed forward. Frank Reade, Jr., bent over him, feeling his pulse, and said:

"Give him air! He has only fainted."

But the awful strain and suffering experienced by Nicolas had told seriously upon his strength.

However, he soon recovered with the aid of stimulants. He managed to mount a horse.

But before doing this he half prostrated himself at Frank's feet.

"Oh! good, kind American!" he cried. "There will

always be a place in the heart of Nicolas for you. Never shall I forget you!"

Then all mounted their horses. The couriers rode in advance. All saluted the voyagers and then the cavalcade dashed away.

Our voyagers watched them until long out of sight.

Then Frank Reade, Jr., drew a deep breath.

"One man's wrongs righted!" he said. "I am very glad!"

"Amen!" said Professor Gaston, and Barney and Pomp looked their feelings.

It was but an hour before noon. The little incident had taken up several hours of time.

But it was decided to resume the journey at once. There were many miles to cover before reaching the pole.

The airship since its overhauling was in first-class shape. It rose into the air as buoyant as a bird and sailed away to the northward.

All were extremely glad that there had been no collision with the prison guard.

Lives would have been lost, perhaps some of their own number would have been killed and the affair been most serious for all parties.

The reprieve had come just in the nick of time. The couriers were entitled to great credit for hunting the prison captain up so promptly.

Every day now the distance across the Arctic was lessened.

Fur suits were in order—for the cold was most bitter.

"Begorra, it's t stieker to me, shure!" cried Barney, in perplexity. "Howiver can it be so much colder at the North Pole than at the South Pole?"

"It is no colder," replied Professor Gaston.

"Phwat's that, sor?"

"I say it's no colder."

"Well, I'm shure it is!"

"Nonsense!" declared Gaston. "The thermometer will not agree with your statement. But I think myself that one feels the cold of the northern frigid zone more than that of the south."

"Well, sor," cried Barney, not to be outdone in an argument, "what's that but being a bit colder!"

"You may be colder," laughed the professor, "but the weather is not."

"Shure, thin, phwy is it that I am so much colder?" protested Barney.

"A peculiar state of affairs which gives two different colds. The atmosphere at the South Pole is a trifle more mild. It is a volcanic region, and perhaps that may account for it.

It is true that the Arctic cold is more penetrating. Yet the thermometer averages the same."

Barney did not attempt to argue the subject further.

He was satisfied, and now turned his attention to Pomp. For several days he had been itching for an opportunity to get square with the ducky for the result of the last practical joke.

The Celt did some deep studying, and finally conjured up a racket which he believed would settle accounts with the ducky in good shape.

The Irishman succeeded in abstracting what was called an invisible wire from Frank's private locker.

This was a very thin but immensely strong steel wire, of about the size of cotton thread. But it was capable of conducting just as powerful an electric current as one five times the size.

It answered the Celt's purpose to a dot. At once he proceeded to work his plans.

Pomp was very methodical in the most of his habits.

In retiring he had a certain way of hanging up his clothes and of tumbling into bed even. It was unvarying in all cases.

His shoes were placed side by side just under the head of his bunk and always in the same position.

Barney had noted this many times and had frequently joked the ducky about it.

"Don' yo' fool yo'self!" Pomp retorted. "Dis ehile hab been in a house what hab eotched afiah an' I done believe in havin' ebertying ready to tumble into quick in case dar is any fiah."

Barney laughed heartily. But this very peculiarity of the ducky now gave him an excellent chance.

That night the ducky retired at his usual hour. It had been his first watch and it was past midnight when he turned in.

Barney was on duty for the rest of the night. The Celt waited until all was quiet and he was assured that Pomp was sound asleep.

Then he crept down into the cabin.

He brought from the dynamo-room the two long coils of invisible wire. These were fastened to screws connected with the dynamos.

Reaching down, Barney slipped a small end of the wire into each shoe of the ducky's. This he fastened in such a way that it could not be easily removed, and yet would not interfere with putting the shoes on.

He made a complete circuit, and then turned on the current.

Now was the time for the fun to begin.

It was a peculiarity of Pomp's that when suddenly awakened his first move was to don his shoes.

He would not more have thought of leaving his bunk without his shoes on than of flying to the moon.

So Barney had the wires well laid. He made sure that everything was all ready.

Then he leaned over and shouted in the darky's ear:

"Foire—foire!"

The result was immediate. Pomp sprang up with a wild yell.

"Massy sakes alibe! Don' burn dis po' ehile up! Sabe me! Fo' de Lor'!"

"Hurry up!" shouted Barney from the engine-room. "There's no toime to lose! Jump into yer boots an' come on!"

"Jes' yo' wait fo' me, I'ish!" gurgled Pomp, who had not yet got the sticks of slumber out of his head. "I'se gwine to be wif yo' right away!"

Then the excited darky made a grab for his shoes. Down into one of them went his foot.

The next moment he went sailing up in a convulsive leap, and struck the partition overhead.

"Golly—massy—whoop la—whoo—I'se done killed! Sabe dis chile!" he yelled, wildly. "Wha' am de mattah?"

The shoe flew off and Pomp was instantly relieved. He was wide awake now. He knew that he had received a tremendous shock, but he could not tell whether it had struck him in the feet or his head.

He imagined that the fire had caused some part of the framework of his bunk to become charged.

Could he have seen Barney at that moment in the engine-room he would have been enlightened.

The Celt was doubled up into a round ball, laughing for all he was worth, silently.

"Fo' massy sakes, wha' am mah shoe?" sputtered Pomp.

But he saw it at that moment and reached for it. Happily his hand did not strike the invisible wire.

Again Pomp's foot went down into the shoe with great force. Once again he was literally lifted in the air.

This time the shoe stuck longer, and he went flopping over the floor in literal agony. Out of compassion Barney shut off the current.

"Begorra, it's square I am wid him now!" he muttered. "Shure, he'll niver thry to play a thriek on me again!"

Pomp had now recovered from his second shoe. He put his hand down to the shoe and felt the invisible wire.

In a moment he had it in his hands, and as he followed it a comprehension of all burst upon him.

There was no fire; it was only a neat joke of Barney's, and

now he heard the haw-haw of the Irishman in the engine-room.

"Great 'possums!" he reflected, sagely, "dat I'ishman hab done got de bes' ob me dis time. But I'll bet mah life he don' do it agen!"

Then he crept slowly and sorrowfully back into his bunk.

Barney met Pomp the next morning on the engine-room stairs, but nothing was said. There was a twinkle in Pomp's eyes, however, which boded no good.

The airship now had reached the frozen seas. Vast fields of ice, densely packed, extended as far as the eye could reach.

The cold was something frightful. To add to the discomforts a blinding snowstorm began its sway.

For hours the Dart battled with the blinding snow. Then Frank decided to find a good place and wait until the storm was over. Much damage was being done to the wings and rotascope by the heavy snow.

So the young inventor selected a spot under the eover of a mighty berg or peak of ice which rose into the air for a height of full a hundred feet.

This kept off the brunt of the storm, and here the airship rested safely.

The electric heating apparatus was taxed to its fullest capacity, for the cold was something frightful.

All remained closely domiciled in the cabin. Frank had the rotascope and wings folded up so that the wind could not damage them.

And here in the gloom of the Arctic night the voyagers waited for the storm to cease.

Barney and Pomp were in their usual cheerful mood, and did much to keep up the spirits of the party with fiddle and banjo.

Irish melodies and negro songs were blended, and even Frank sang a sentimental song, for he was possessed of a beautiful tenor voice.

The storm raged for a long time. Indeed, it seemed as if the airship must be finally buried in the fearful white drift.

But at length the temperature began to rise, and Barney suggested a little trip outside.

"Shure, I haven't used me snowshoes yet," he declared. "And here is a most illegant opportunity."

All agreed with the lively Celt.

The snowshoes were brought out and all donned them. Then the thickest of furs were worn.

For the cold was most bitter, and unless warmly clad human life could be supported but a very short time.

Opening the cabin door the voyagers walked out upon

the snow-clad deck. It was a wild and wonderful scene which was presented to them.

CHAPTER X.

BARNEY'S DISAPPEARANCE—FIGHT WITH BEARS.

As far as the eye could reach all was one vast snow bank. The wind rioting had twisted the loose material into all sorts of fantastic shapes.

The snow had now ceased falling and the air was crisp and clear.

Leaving the airship's deck the voyagers walked boldly out upon the huge drifts.

The snowshoes prevented their sinking into the white depths, perhaps over their heads.

Frank Reade, Jr., led the way to the highest point accessible and from this a good view of the surroundings could be had.

It was a bleak, desolate and forbidding region spread to view.

Yet the white country had its peculiar beauty and charms. Like crystal palaces the bergs of clearest ice glistened in the rarefied air.

"Grand!" cried Professor Gaston. "Where will you ever see the likes again?"

"Begorra, I wish I had a toboggan!" cried Barney, pointing to an icy slope near.

"Yo' don' need nuffin' ob dat kind, sah!" cried Pomp. "Jes' slide down on yo' feet an' stiddy yo'se'f wif a pike."

All the party had long pike poles with iron tips to prevent sliding into any hole or dangerous pit.

Barney was just in a mood to refute any dare that Pomp might offer, so he cried:

"Bejabers, I'll go ye!"

"A'right, I'ish!"

Away went the two jokers at full speed across the snow. They reached the slope a few moments later.

The slide was fully a hundred yards in length, and was quite steep and slippery. Frank looked anxious.

"I fear they are rash," he said. "If one of them should fall he might break some bones."

But Professor Gaston laughed.

"Have no fear," he said. "They will make it all safely. It is fun for them."

The two jokers were now on the brow of the descent. They were chaffing each other in a friendly manner.

"Am yo' ready, I'ish?" cried Pomp.

"Begorra, I am!"

"Then jes' follow me!"

With their pikes thrust deep into the ice behind, and acting both as rudder and support, they began the slide.

The surface seemed as smooth as polished glass. Down they shot at lightning speed.

It required but a few brief seconds to cover the distance.

But before it was covered a thrilling incident occurred. Suddenly, and when half way down, there was a crackling sound, and Barney threw up his arms and disappeared.

Pomp went on down to the end of the slide.

A cry of horror burst simultaneously from the lips of Frank Reade, Jr., and Professor Gaston.

"My soul!" cried the young inventor. "My fears are realized! Barney is lost!"

They lost no time, but started at once for the spot.

Reaching the foot of the slide, Frank saw the explanation of Barney's disappearance.

There, in the surface of the slide, was a yawning hole. The ice in this spot was thin and had covered a pit, into which the unlucky Celt had fallen.

With the aid of his pike, Frank crawled to the edge of the hole and looked in.

What he beheld gave him an awful, horrified chill.

"My God!" he cried, wildly, "Barney has gone to his death!"

"Don't say that!" cried Gaston. "Can we not pull him out of that awful hole?"

"No," replied Frank, sadly. "Barney is beyond earthly aid!"

By this time Pomp and Gaston were by Frank's side. A glance into the hole was enough.

It was a deep, circular opening, extending downward for twenty feet. At its bottom was a surging, boiling mass of icy waters.

It was into the ocean that Barney had dropped.

Doubtless before this he had been carried under the vast field of ice and was beyond earthly aid.

For a moment the three explorers looked at each other in utter horror.

Then Pomp began to wail in sorrow.

"Fo' de good Lor', am de I'ishman done gone an' drown-ed?" he cried. "Den dis chile am lef' all alone. Boo, hoo, hoo! He was jes' de bes' frien' I eber had. Wha' am I gwine to do now?"

Indeed, all were deeply affected. Pomp was inconsolable.

Watch was kept at the hole for a reasonable time in the faint hope that the Celt would reappear.

But he did not.

Sorrowfully the three explorers now returned to the air-

ship. But before they reached it they were confronted with new and startling incidents.

The Dart was half buried in the snow at the foot of the big berg. As Frank and his companions came in sight of the Dart they paused.

Clambering over the deck were a number of fur-clad forms.

At first the explorers thought them human beings, but a closer glance showed that they were huge white bears.

Six of the monsters were boarding the airship in the coolest possible manner.

"Great heavens!" exclaimed Professor Gaston. "What does that mean, Frank?"

"It looks as if the bears had taken possession of our property," declared the young inventor.

"Can they do any harm?"

"Certainly. We must tackle them at once."

The prospect of tackling the six monsters was by no means a pleasant one.

The white bear is known as a powerful and savage beast and not easily handled.

But there was no alternative for the adventurers.

They must certainly regain the airship. It was not easy to say how long the bears would remain on board or what damage they might do.

"Forward!" cried Frank. "Reserve your fire until at close quarters."

This command was obeyed.

When near the rail fire was opened with the Winchesters. One of the bears tumbled in a heap with three bullets in his carcass.

Frank's plan was to tackle one bear at a time and fire at him until he succumbed. This would have been all very well had the bears remained inactive.

But this they did not seem disposed to do. At sight of the white men they came to the attack at once.

The white bear is a huge, unwieldy monster, but nevertheless supple and quick in action.

The five remaining bears started for the explorers pell mell. They were evidently hungry and regarded them as lawful prey.

"Look out!" shouted Frank. "Separate and fire as rapidly as you can."

These instructions were followed.

Pomp retreated as fast as his legs could carry him with two of the bears after him. On even ground the darky might have distanced them.

But on the snowshoes he found it hot work to keep out

of reach of their paws. Once overtaken, his fate would be sealed.

Knowing this, he sped on with all speed. There was no chance to turn and fire until he had gained at least a reasonable distance.

The darky was all pluck, however, and kept on at a rapid pace. Finally he managed to gain a pinnacle of ice which projected upward from the plain.

This he believed was his opportunity.

Quick as a flash he dodged behind it. Then he drew aim at almost point-blank range and fired at the first bear.

The bullet took effect in the brute's brain, through the eye. It staggered back and then dropped in a heap.

A yell of pleasure escaped the darky's lips. He was about to draw back the hammer and throw a second cartridge into the rifle barrel when he saw, with horror, that there was not another cartridge in the chamber of the repeater.

He had just time to dodge the surviving bear around the ice pinnacle.

Round and round he went, the bear at his heels. The predicament was a comical as well as a serious one.

"Golly! wha' am I gwine to do?" reflected the darky. "I kain't keep dis sort of fing up fo'ebber."

The bear was enraged at his futile effort to capture his prey. Pomp eluded him every time.

Then a daring idea occurred to the darky. He broke away and made a dash for the airship.

If he could reach it and gain an entrance to the cabin he would be saved. Unarmed as he was it was certain death to face the bear.

Swift as he could, Pomp ran toward the Dart. The bear was howling close at his heels.

Indeed, when the Dart's rail was reached the monster was hardly three yards behind. A dozen yards more and Pomp would certainly have been captured.

Over the rail at a leap went the darky. The next moment he reached the cabin door.

He threw his weight against it and it gave way. Into the cabin he sprang. The bear paused at the door.

While the brute seemed to be meditating upon the feasibility of entering, Pomp procured an elephant rifle.

This threw a deadly explosive shell of Frank Reade, Jr.'s own invention. Pomp took steady aim at the brute.

Then he fired.

The shell struck the bear in the chest. It was instantly fatal, penetrating the heart. Pomp had won.

Then the victorious darky thought of his companions.

"Golly! I done fink Marse Frank am habin' a hard time!" he cried.

This was indeed true.

Professor Gaston was dodging his bear behind an ice column as Pomp had been. But Frank was in hand-to-hand conflict with the remaining two bears.

The young inventor had fired three bullets into the body of one of the bears. But though somewhat crippled, the beast was yet in fighting trim.

And both had come to close quarters with Frank.

He had drawn his long hunting-knife and was slashing at the brutes, but it was a moral certainty that he would have been soon overpowered had it not been for the opportune coming of Pomp.

The darky rushed up at this moment and cried:

"Jes' yo' hol' on, Marse Frank. I'se here, an' I'se gwine to save yo'."

Placing his elephant rifle close against the body of one of the bears Pomp pulled the trigger. The effect was fatal.

The brute's vitals were literally destroyed, and it sank dying upon the snow. The other bear Frank quickly finished with his knife.

Then the two victorious hunters went to the rescue of Professor Gaston.

This sole remaining bear was easily dispatched and the battle was over.

Beyond a few scratches and cuts the party was uninjured. But all realized what good reason there was for self-congratulation.

"By Jove!" cried Frank. "Six bears to three men! That is the biggest luck for one day's hunting that I have ever seen."

"If we had been hunting for such game we could never have found it in such numbers," declared Professor Gaston.

"I don't know about dat!" said Pomp, dubiously. "Dar am a heap ob dem critters in dese regions!"

"Well," cried Frank, cheerily, "let us remove their pelts and keep them as trophies of our prowess. anyhow."

CHAPTER XI.

AT THE NORTH POLE.

This was quickly done.

Pomp was an adept at the business, and soon the six pelts were stored away on board the airship.

Then it was decided to ascend and continue the journey to the Pole.

"We ought to locate that very-much-sought spot in two days more," declared Frank; "then we are homeward bound."

Somehow the sound of the words "homeward bound" had begun to have a powerful charm for the explorers.

The time they had been absent and the thrilling experiences which had been theirs were certainly sufficient to satisfy the most fastidious seeker of wild adventure.

"Surely it will seem good to see home once more," declared Gaston, warmly. "And think of the honor which awaits us!"

Pomp now lacked the co-operation of Barney in clearing the snow from the deck of the airship and its rigging.

But Frank and Gaston lent their services in this. Soon the deck was quite clear and ship-shape.

Then the rotascope was raised and the wings expanded.

The machinery was tried to see that no harm had come to it. Then all was in readiness for the start.

But just as Frank was about to enter the pilot-house a wild cry escaped Pomp's lips.

"Fo' de Lor' sakes, Marse Frank!" he screamed, "jes' east yo' eye ober yender!"

Frank did so. The sight which rewarded his gaze was a thrilling one.

Painfully clambering over an icy ridge near were two men. As they reached its summit and were in full view of the airship one of them shouted:

"Help! Help!"

"Great heavens!" was Frank's wild cry, "that is Barney!"

"Barney!" gasped the professor.

"Yes, back from the dead!"

"Massy sakes, it am his ghostis!" cried Pomp, in terror.

"Don' go ober dere, Marse Frank!"

"Don't be a fool!" cried Frank, angrily. "Come along, both of you!"

Gaston followed Frank instantly.

Barney it was, and but just alive. The Celt was covered with a coating of ice.

The man with him was shrunken to a shadow, with pale, cadaverous features. He could hardly creep along and blood marked his course over the snow.

"Barney!" cried Frank, rushing up to the spot. "Thank God you are alive! How did you come here, and who is this?"

"Begorra, Misther Frank, it's a long swim I had!" replied Barney. "An' it's nigh dead I am wid me wet clothes. Shure, we'll tell yez all about it whin we get warm!"

"Help us, for the love of God!" said the pallid wretch, in a whisper.

Nothing more was said until the two exhausted men were helped aboard the airship.

Then Barney was undressed and thawed out, and both were given hot drink and food.

The Celt's story was brief and succinct.

"Shure, whin I fell into that hole," he declared, "fer toime me head was under wather. Then I cum up into the air an' all was dark.

"I felt mesilf being carried along by the current, an' thin all becamе loight agin an' I kem out into daylight wanst more. I was carried about a moile below here, to a big, open basin av wather. I cloimbed out, an' shure there in the ice I saw the hull av a big ship.

"Masts nor riggin' there was none, only the hull. An' whin I wint up to it this gentleman erawled out an' spoke to me. Shure, he kin tell his story betther than me."

"Golly! but I am done glad fo' to see yo' safe agin, I'ish!" cried Pomp, with glistening eyes.

"Shure, an' it's glad I am to be wid yez wanst again!" replied Barney.

The Arctic refugee now began, in a weak, quavering voice to tell his story.

"Three years I have passed in thus cursed clime!" he declared. "All has been solitude like unto death. Oh, God! the horror of that time!

"Three years ago our brig, the Valiant, in command of Captain Alexander Bent, was nipped by the ice and drifted hither, after many months of futile attempt to liberate her.

"I was the first mate, James Spencer, and I am to-day the only survivor. Within six months from the nipping of the ship every member of the crew of twelve men, save myself, were dead.

"A fearful disease struck us and all had it but me. I prayed to have it, but fate ordered otherwise.

"I buried them all, one by one, in the ice. Then I was left in solitude. For three years I lived on the stores of the ship.

"But last week the last biscuit gave out. I had no longer strength to hunt. I had given myself up to die when this man appeared before me. Even now it seems as if I must be dreaming."

"No," replied Frank, cheerily, "you are not dreaming. Cheer up, my good man, for you are sure of getting back home."

"What!" cried the castaway. "Do not mock me. You are east away here like me?"

"No; this is our ship."

"Ah, but you will never sail it home. This ice will never break up."

"You are wrong!" cried Frank. "This is an airship. We sail in the air."

"An airship!" the poor fellow passed his hand across

his brow in a troubled manner. "No, no; it is really a dream! I shall soon awake, as I have many times before."

Then he lapsed into a revery.

"Let him be!" said Frank, compassionately. "Poor fellow, his brain is weak. He will be stronger soon."

Barney was soon himself again and as chipper as ever. There was no reason now why the journey should not be continued.

Spencer, the castaway, was asleep. The airship was soon aloft in the air and speeding on its way.

Frank, as well as possible, took his bearings.

"Barely two days more!" he declared. "Then we shall reach the North Pole!"

"We have heard much of the open Polar sea," declared Professor Gaston. "Now we shall have a chance to prove it."

"Right!" cried Frank. "And it is really in existence!"

"You know that?"

"Yes, I do."

The airship sped on for hours. As Frank had predicted, just two days were occupied in reaching the Pole.

In the meantime Spenceer had come to himself and was overwhelmed with amazement at his position.

"An airship!" he exclaimed. "The impossible has come to pass! I really cannot realize that I am going home!"

Then great joy became his. Truly it was not to be wondered at, for he might regard it as being almost equivalent to being brought back from death to life.

When the exact locality of the Pole was reached all were disappointed.

It was a cold, blustering spot; a sort of elevation among hills of rugged rock, now, however, heavily coated with ice and snow.

"Now for home!" cried Frank. "Our journey is near its end!"

The mention of home had a magic sound. But thrilling events were yet in store.

The course taken by Frank was a straight line for the Arctic Islands and Hudson's Bay.

For days the airship kept steadily on this course.

Baffin's Land and many of the small islands in the Gulf of Bothnia were passed over in the flight.

Then the waters of Hudson's Bay burst upon the view of the voyagers.

It was truly a wonderful sight.

The course was along the east shore of Hudson's Bay. When near James Bay and at the mouth of the Great Whale River an astounding thing happened.

Suddenly and without warning the airship began to fall.

"Great heavens!" cried Professor Gaston. "What has happened?"

"Something is wrong!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., "the machinery has failed us!"

However this was it was certain that the airship was bound to reach the earth. The rotascope and wings seemed to have lost their power.

Barney, who was in the pilot-house, steered the Dart to a good landing place just in the verge of a forest of firs.

The waters of the bay were not one hundred yards distant.

Had the airship fallen into them the result would have been serious enough. It would have meant death.

But fortunately they were to alight on shore. Down settled the airship until it struck the earth.

Then Frank went over the machinery critically. He found the defect as he had believed he should in the machinery.

He located the break and then said to his anxious companions:

"It can be repaired, but it will require a couple of days to do it in."

This meant a delay, and just at a time when all were anxious to reach home. Yet no demur was made.

The anchors were put out and then work was begun.

As Frank had predicted there was a couple of days' work on the machinery. The job was pushed forward as rapidly as possible and had been nearly completed when an exciting incident occurred.

Suddenly in the water of the bay there appeared a number of the peculiar Esquiman canoes, known as kayaks.

In each was an Esquiman equipped for seal hunting.

They landed and approached the airship. Short and squatty in figure they were, with greasy countenances. A more villainous-looking set had never been seen by the voyagers.

They conversed with Frank for a while in broken English, and then went away. As they disappeared Frank said, with conviction:

"Do you know I do not believe we have seen the last of them. I feel sure that we shall have trouble."

"You may be sure of that!" declared Spencer. "I know something about their race, and I tell you they are a bad lot."

"Begorra, ther's enough av us to whip them!" averred Barney.

"That may be true," agreed Frank, "but it will put us to the unpleasant necessity of killing a few of them."

That night a careful guard was kept. Barney and Pomp

watched alternately. But it was not until the next day that the real trouble came.

CHAPTER XII.

THE PROFESSOR'S ADVENTURE.

Then Frank Reade, Jr.'s premise proved correct. However, no open attack was made upon the Dart.

But it happened in as bad a way, in fact, much worse. Professor Gaston was out upon an exploring tour.

The professor was enriching his collection of rare fossils, and was about a quarter of a mile from the airship when attacked.

Suddenly and without warning he found himself surrounded by the Esquimaux. He blew his whistle.

The professor's Winchester was under his arm. He could have shot a couple of them, but he knew that it would mean his instant death.

"White man gib gun to Eskimo!" said the leader. "Come along! Be prisoner. Mebbe so he live, mebbe not so, he die!"

"Hold on!" said the shrewd scientist. "Just wait until I return and I will bring you some more guns."

"No! White man stay. Mebbe no come back. Stay here!"

Gaston saw that he was in for it. Yet he did not believe for a moment that his life was as yet in special danger.

He ransacked his brain in vain for a subterfuge by which to foil the Esquimaux. But each time he was disappointed.

Finally he was led away into the fir forest. A few moments more of delay and he would have been rescued by his friends.

Frank was in the engine-room when he heard the whistle of alarm.

"Quick, then!" cried Frank. "Pomp, you stay with the airship."

Barney and Spencer grabbed their rifles and followed Frank. Soon they had reached the spot where the professor had been seized by the Esquimaux.

Their tracks were seen and understood at once by Frank.

All search was of no avail. It was known that the professor was in the hands of the Esquimaux and that was all.

Back to the airship the three men went and to work.

Meanwhile the professor was having some thrilling experiences.

As the party tramped on the professor could not help wondering what his fate was to be.

He was not left long in doubt.

Suddenly the party came out of the fir forest and were in sight of a long, level plain extending down to the sea.

And near the water's edge were a number of huts made of brush and bark. This was the manner of habitation used by the Esquimaux of this region in lieu of ice.

Perhaps there were a hundred or more of these huts.

A vast throng of Esquimaux came out to meet them.

The prisoner was surrounded by a howling mob. Some of them seemed disposed to do him harm.

But the leader of the band kept them back in his persuasive way, by swinging his battle-club about him.

The prisoner was led down into the Esquimaux settlement. His arms and legs were bound with thongs, and he was unceremoniously tumbled upon the ground.

As he lay in the midst of his foes thus, the professor fell to wondering if his whistle of alarm had been heard at the airship.

If it had there was good reason to believe that he might expect help and perhaps rescue.

But as time passed and his friends did not appear he began to give up hope.

His position was becoming unendurable, when suddenly the Esquimaux chief appeared and gave some orders to his men.

The prisoner was lifted and the thongs which bound his feet being severed he was commanded to stand up.

Then the Esquimaux chief said, in broken English:

"White man mebbe live. He gib Eskimo man more gun and more fire dust. See?"

The professor grasped the situation.

"All right," he said; "let me go and I'll get the guns for you."

But the chief smiled in a leering way.

"Eskimo no fool! White man go, mebbe stay. No come back, Eskimo be big fool."

"Well, then, how am I to get the guns for you?" argued the professor.

"Mebbe see."

The chief beckoned to one of the tribe, a muscular fellow, who came forward.

"He go tell you people he want gun, see! You tell him."

Gaston was not disposed to be reckless.

He saw at once that if he could not gain all the pie at least a piece would be better than nothing at all.

He realized that if his friends were thus notified of his predicament they would adopt some speedy plan for his rescue.

So he said:

"Very well, chief. Send your man to my friends. They will give you guns, and then you shall set me free."

The Esquimaux now all seemed to be waiting for the return of their courier.

Frank had just finished his job of repairing the machinery when the Esquimaux' messenger arrived.

"Well, you greasy rascal, what do you want?" he asked.

"Heap gun!" was the reply. "Mebbe you give me, mebbe no kill you man. See?"

"Ah!" said Frank, with comprehension. "You have got one of our men in your clutches, eh?"

"Yep!" replied the Esquimaux.

"Come aboard this airship and I'll go with you."

But this did not strike the wretch's fancy.

"No, mebbe not," he said, shaking his head violently.

"Mebbe gib me guns!"

"Mebbe I won't," said Frank, sternly. "Come over, or die!"

He aimed a revolver at the villain. The Esquimaux knew what that meant and began to beg.

"Mebbe no kill me. Sabe white man. He live, no kill me!"

"You diabolical shark, you!" cried Frank, grabbing the miscreant's collar. "Come aboard here, and no fooling!"

And Frank pulled him over the rail where he lay cowering upon the deck.

"Now, Barney," he cried, "send her up!"

Barney needed no second command.

The airship sprang into the air. She was as steady once more as a humming top.

Over the fir forest she sped. It was hardly ten minutes before the Esquimaux village was in sight.

The natives at sight of the airship seemed imbued with terror.

They retreated with dismay into their bough huts.

Frank allowed the airship to descend right on the verge of the settlement. Then he picked up the shivering wretch on the deck and hurled him over the rail.

"Go tell your chief I want to see him," he said.

In a few moments the esquimaux chief sullenly appeared.

As he stood with folded arms by his bough hut Frank addressed him:

"You greasy scoundrel! You thought to make a treaty with me and force me to give you firearms, did you? Why, I've a mind to annihilate the whole tribe of you!"

The Esquimaux flashed a leering, contemptuous glance at Frank and replied:

"White man mebbe fly in air; but Eskimo man no 'fraid ob him."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END.

Frank was amazed at the cool nerve and effrontery of the wretch. For a moment the young inventor was silent.

Then he said:

"You have one of our men in captivity here. I want him."

The chief shook his head sullenly.

"What?"

"Mebbe no."

"Mebbe, yes!" cried Frank, angrily. "Come, I'll blow you to perdition if you don't give him up!"

"No can do dat."

"Why?"

"White man killed!"

For a moment Frank reeled as if given a terrific blow. He turned ghastly pale. Then Gaston was dead.

"That is awful!" he thought.

But something in the Esquimaux chief's face caused him to start. He grasped the situation at once.

"You are lying!" he hissed, leaning over the rail. "Give him up, or I'll kill you and all your cowardly crew!"

The Esquimaux chief laughed scornfully, and gave a peculiar cry. In a moment the vicinity was thronged with armed natives.

Frank saw that the crisis had come. There was no use in dallying further.

He picked up a bomb brought him by Barney and hurled it fairly into the midst of the murderous horde.

In a flash there was a frightful explosion. Heaps of dead and dying Esquimaux lay upon the ground.

The survivors fled wildly. Frank leaped from the airship's deck. He rushed into the nearest bough hut.

There was Gaston bound hand and foot.

"Thank God! you have come to save me!" cried the scientist. "You are none too soon!"

"But there is yet danger!" cried Frank. "Follow me quickly!"

To the airship they rushed. The Esquimaux were recovering and seemed ready to fight. But though he could have annihilated the whole gang, Frank did not wait for their attack.

Up into the air sprang the airship.

The course was at once set to the southward and for a week was firmly held. Then evidences of civilization appeared.

Canada was passed over, Lake Erie and then the United States was once more beneath the aerial voyagers.

Home again! There was an indescribable charm in the words.

The airship descended into Readestown one evening. The next morning every daily paper in the world was recording the return of the travelers from zone to zone.

James Spencer returned to his home where he was happily welcomed.

Professor Gaston took the first train to New York and reported to the committee of the scientific society.

The much-mooted question of the two Poles was settled forever. Professor Gaston was instantly made honorary member in every scientific society in the world.

Indeed, the honors thrust upon him were most burdensome.

Barney and Pomp were pleased to once more return to their duties in quiet old Readestown.

"I don' fink I want berry much to do wif dem Arctic countries!" Pomp declared. "Dey am a pooty po' place fo' a live man."

"Bejabers, I'm wid yez, naygur!" cried Barney. "Hur-roo fer ould Oireland an' Afriky!"

"And hurrah for America, the queen of all nations!" cried Frank Reade, Jr., with a laugh, for he had overheard them.

The Dart was at once taken to pieces. The strain of her long voyage would preclude any possibility of ever using her again.

But the young inventor had plenty of other plans to develop.

For many a day the famous trip of Frank Reade, Jr., and his airship, the Dart, from zone to zone, rang through the country.

But though this was certainly a most extraordinary feat, the young inventor had even mightier projects on hand, some of which the reader may hear of at a later day.

THE END.

Read "FRANK READE, JR., AND HIS ELECTRIC CRUISER OF THE LAKES; OR, A JOURNEY THROUGH AFRICA BY WATER," which will be the next number (14) of "Frank Reade Weekly Magazine."

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